POLICY STATEMENT

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At the opening of the 12th Special Session of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum

Nairobi, 20 February 2012
Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In marking UNEP’s 40th anniversary we have the opportunity to review four decades of environmental policy-making and the responsibility to look into the next four decades and beyond.

How can the global voice of the world’s environment ministers be not only heard, but registered and acted upon?

The Rio+20 theme of a Green Economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication is about equity — social, economic and environmental.

It is also about equity in respect to you honourable ministers — a way of demonstrating, through rigorous analysis, your right and responsibility to be as much in the driving seat of your nation’s destinies as the transport, health, employment, agriculture, infrastructure, foreign affairs or finance minister.
The second overarching theme of the institutional framework for sustainable development must be more than environment.

But without reform and the re-focusing of the institutions responsible for delivering environmental sustainability, one finds it hard to see a truly catalytic and sustainable outcome at Rio+20 in four months’ time.

On the eve of Rio+20, we have an opportunity to make a bold statement about the root causes that the UN Conference on Sustainable Development 2012 must address, and trigger the processes that will set seven billion people on an environmentally sustainable path.

At your request and with your support, UNEP has also been reinventing itself to meet the challenges of a new century.

The new Medium Term Strategy 2010-2013 re-focused the organization’s work around six sub-programme areas. Midway through the period, my assessment and that of independent assessors in respect to progress is positive.

Indeed, 2011 has proved to be a landmark year in which many of the transformational reforms launched in 2008 are bearing fruit, in terms of the shift to a results-based, more effective and a more responsive UNEP.

Efforts have been made to strengthen the science base, bridge the science-policy gap and put high quality and timely information and tools in the hands of decisions-makers.

In 2011, UNEP registered a strong performance across sub-programmes in achieving results and expected accomplishments, with 15 of 21 expected accomplishments fully achieved, five expected accomplishments partially achieved, and only one insufficiently met.

The organization has also made an important contribution to the Rio+20 preparatory process, from the Nairobi-Helsinki outcome through to the landmark Green Economy report and its spin off reports involving a wide range of partners.

As we enter 2012, taking stock of the past 40 years, the environment programme of the UN is well-placed to assist member states meet the challenges and deliver on the opportunities that may emerge from Rio+20 and beyond.
PART 1:
40 YEARS OF POLICY-MAKING FOR THE ENVIRONMENT
As we look back on the four decades of UNEP’s existence, there is much to celebrate.

These years have witnessed the birth and transformation of the institutions required for environmental policy-making, at the national, regional and international levels — from the establishment of ministries dedicated to environmental protection, to inter-ministerial committees to address climate change or sustainable development, and their equivalents in regional institutions.

I look forward to hearing this afternoon the former Executive Directors of UNEP share with us their perspectives on the evolution of global environmental policy and the institutional architecture.

**INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL LAW**

Over the years, we, collectively, as the United Nations Environment Programme, have contributed to building a common body of international environmental law that constitutes the very backbone for addressing global environmental challenges.

One of the earliest multilateral environmental agreements - the 1973 Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) - has led to over 30,000 species being protected.

This Convention was later complemented by the Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals, and at Rio, the Convention on Biological Diversity, to which we have added two Protocols.

These build on conventions such as the Ramsar Convention as well as regional agreements such as the African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources.

The effort to protect the ozone layer is one of the most frequently cited success stories in international environmental policy-making.

The Vienna Convention and its 1987 Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer have led to the reduction of over 98 per cent of controlled ozone-depleting substances, and a significant contribution to climate change mitigation.

On chemicals and hazardous substances, international agreements have been developed to regulate the transboundary movements of hazardous waste, procedures put in place for the international trade of hazardous chemicals and pesticides, and agreement reached to phase out certain persistent organic pollutants, while negotiations are underway on a global legally binding instrument on mercury.
The first Montevideo Programme on environmental law of 1982 and its two successor ten-year programmes has been a central pillar of UNEP’s work over the years.

The Programme has assisted 120 governments to develop environmental legislation, and identify and address challenges in implementation, compliance and enforcement.

**SCIENCE FOR POLICY-MAKING**

We have made significant strides forward in scientific knowledge, and in deepening our understanding of complex interactions between ecosystems and human beings actions.

Over four decades, UNEP’s environmental assessments, their underlying data and methodology have become a reference and authoritative source of information.

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, which highlighted the importance of ecosystems to human well-being, has had an influence on policy and decision-making worldwide including the establishment of The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) partnership which has spawned new, national assessments of natural capital and is a stream of UNEP’s Green Economy Initiative.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), hosted by UNEP and the World Meteorological Organization, has delivered the most influential, comprehensive and scientifically reviewed reports on climate change, and played a decisive role in assessing the science in support of the climate change negotiations.

More recently the International Resource Panel, hosted by UNEP and established to provide the scientific impetus for decoupling economic growth and resource use, has brought out sobering projections on the tripling of resource use by 2050.

It is now developing options for global action to ‘decouple’ natural resources use from economic development.

And last year, governments agreed to establish an Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) designed to bridge the gap between science and policy for better and more focused action on biodiversity and ecosystem services in support of the relevant conventions.
ENVIROMENTAL INFORMATION AND DATA

UNEP has made a major contribution on environmental data and information systems, which are critical to conducting assessment, policy-making and monitoring.

Through successive revolutions in internet technology, UNEP has sought to harness the advances in information technology and communication to promote sharing, provide access to information and improve governance.

From the first INFOTERRA programme to today’s Global Environment Outlook data portals, partnerships and networks, UNEP has played the catalytic role envisaged by its founders in de-fragmenting data and information across different institutional custodians to harness the best available scientific facts and figures to support scientific assessment and early warning.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

We have built up a diverse array of policy instruments for addressing the complex range of environmental challenges of today.

UNEP has contributed in various ways to developing this collective body of knowledge, whether through training material on Environmental Impact Assessments, lessons learned, case studies, best practice and guidelines, or hands-on experience in providing support to countries to implement commitments under multilateral environmental agreement (MEAs).

Over the years, UNEP has engaged with the range of organizations of the UN system, as intended in its original mandate.

Today, with growing awareness of environmental imperatives and their intrinsic linkages to every facet of the economy, almost every UN agency has a programme or division on the environmental dimensions of its work.

This is perhaps a measure of the success in mainstreaming environment across the UN system, with the challenge now shifting to coherent implementation and integration.
ENGAGEMENT OF MAJOR GROUPS AND STAKEHOLDERS

UNEP has developed partnerships with major groups and stakeholders, to carry, amplify and enrich its messages.

Civil society and other stakeholders are UNEP’s natural allies in raising awareness, informing the public and reaching out, and have played a critical role with their growing expertise and capacity in supporting environmental efforts from national to global levels.

Over the years, they have contributed to building the environmental knowledge base and together we have helped to communicate information about the state of the planet, new and emerging threats, but also success stories.
PART 2: TRENDS IN THE STATE OF THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT
Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Summary for Policy Makers of the Fifth Global Environmental Outlook is being launched at this Governing Council, which as you know, has been prepared through an extensive consultative process.

This report provides the most up-to-date assessment of the state of the global environment and an evaluation of the gaps in achieving key internationally agreed environmental goals. It also identifies possible options for action and innovation to transition towards sustainable development.

I would like to highlight some of the reports key findings.

The currently observed changes to the earth are unprecedented, and, despite our efforts, several critical global, regional and local thresholds have been exceeded.

The impacts affect human security, health, natural assets, food security and the provision of ecosystem services.

While efforts to protect the stratospheric ozone stand out as a success, climate change remains a serious challenge and threatens overall development goals.

Pressures on land resources are increasing; the drivers are economic growth, population growth, consumption patterns and global markets, which cause deforestation, land conversion, land degradation and urbanization.

Gains have been achieved in access to safe drinking water, but the limits of sustainability of water resources have already been surpassed. Eighty per cent of the world lives in areas with high levels of threat to water security. Over ninety per cent of the total water footprint is related to agriculture, which could be used more efficiently through better irrigation and water reuse.

There are signs of continuing degradation to the oceans, such as serious eutrophication, marine litter and acidification from increased CO₂ concentrations.

Although protected areas cover nearly 13 per cent of the total land area, less than 1.5 per cent of total marine area is protected. Biodiversity losses continue, with species loss contributing to ecosystem deterioration, and a decline in the provision of ecosystems services.
While the development of the chemicals industry has brought benefits, there are also negative effects on human health and the environment from associated with some chemicals.

Greater urbanization has contributed to the generation of more waste, including e-waste and hazardous waste. There are mixed results in implementing policies to manage waste across countries. It is evident that recycling alone will not be a sufficient solution, and prevention, minimization and reuse all require attention.

The Fifth Edition of the Global Environmental Outlook recommends shifting the policy focus from reducing the environmental pressures or treating the symptoms, to addressing the underlying drivers, which are the negative aspects of population growth, consumption and production, urbanization and globalization.

The rapid growth of the drivers, the complexity of their patterns and ability to generate unexpected impacts make the task more challenging.

A section of the report focusses on innovative responses, such as:

- redirecting or reversing what is unsustainable;
- strengthening a sustainability mindset in society through education and awareness raising;
- changing rules and incentives to advance sustainability; and
- impacting organizations to keep environmental pressures at sustainable levels.

Sustainable development goals and metrics, enhancing capacity, enhanced effectiveness of global institutions, consistent time series data for monitoring, strengthened environmental education, and access to information and public participation are some of the ingredients for moving to meet internationally agreed goals and targets.
• Keeping track of our changing environment

• GEO-5 Summary for Policy Makers

www.unep.org/geo/
PART 3:
UNEP ACHIEVEMENTS
IN 2011
Looking back on achievements in 2011 also provides the opportunity to take stock of our progress at the end of the first biennium of the new four-year Medium-Term Strategy (2010-2013).

The Medium-Term Strategy sets out the next phase in UNEP’s work to become a more effective, efficient and results-focused entity, through six new priorities areas.

**CLIMATE CHANGE**

UNEP’s work on climate change aims to strengthen the ability of countries to integrate climate change responses into national development processes, through a set of programmes at the global, regional, country and municipal levels.

The achievements in this area over the biennium are substantial, building in a short period of time a sub-programme that delivers tangible results.

UNEP has provided capacity building, training, regional knowledge networks, and information and policy analysis in support of the climate change negotiations process, and facilitated the provision of finance for implementing clean energy and energy-efficient policies.

By way of example, I would like to highlight a recent contribution to the science-policy interface. On the eve of the climate COP17 in Durban and Montreal Protocol talks in Bali, UNEP published three major reports on climate change, putting the latest science at the disposal of negotiators.

- *Bridging the emissions gap*
- *Near term climate protection and clean air benefits—Actions for reducing short-lived forcers (SLCFs)*
- *HFCs: A critical link between protecting climate and the ozone layer*

[www.unep.org/publications](http://www.unep.org/publications)
HARMFUL SUBSTANCES AND HAZARDOUS WASTE

In the harmful substance and hazardous waste sub-programme, the engagement of the various stakeholders has continued to grow in the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM). By 2011, the number of countries and businesses which have strengthened their ability to better manage chemicals and hazardous wastes through the SAICM reporting process stood at 162, 92 more than in 2009.

Membership in the Global Mercury Partnership has also grown, and UNEP for its part delivered high-quality scientific, technical and policy information related to key areas of mercury use and release.

Progress has been made in implementing the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, and negotiations towards a global treaty on mercury were formally launched in 2010.

The process of identifying synergies in the chemicals and waste cluster has yielded its first successes. Integration of conference services and meeting support has brought immediate efficiencies and cost-savings in the delivery of services.

The COPs of these Conventions approved cross-cutting and joint activities for inclusion in their work programmes, and the Basel and Stockholm COPs agreed on further synergies in the designated Regional Centres.

These steps are part of a broader effort to overcome fragmentation in the global system of environmental governance.
RESOURCE EFFICIENCY

UNEP’s contribution on the green economy has been widely credited with bringing new analysis and empirical evidence on how to meet the sustainable development challenge. The quality of technical and policy work, and the manner in which the process has engaged the academic, research and policy-making communities across the world, in developing and developing countries alike is reflected in the global response to UNEP’s ground-breaking report “Towards a Green Economy: Pathways to Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication”.

There are a growing number of requests from countries to UNEP to provide support for country green economy scoping studies, and providing training and capacity building.

The flagship report of the International Resource Panel “Decoupling Natural Resource Use and Environmental Impacts from Economic Growth” marked another milestone in UNEP’s efforts to bridge the science-policy gap, by linking state of the art science and research to the policy arena where solutions and options are developed.

The success of this work reflects the recognition that a sustainable future rests on increasing efficiency and that the use of materials and resources, both renewable and non-renewable, be decoupled from economic growth.

- Towards a Green Economy: Pathways to Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication
- Why a Green Economy Matters for Least Developed Countries
- A Brief for Policymakers on the Green Economy and Millennium Development Goals

www.unep.org/greeneconomy
DISASTERS AND CONFLICTS

UNEP’s has continued to provide critical and much-needed support to countries post-conflict and in the aftermath of disasters. From post-conflict environmental assessments in Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, to rapid environmental emergency assessments following pipeline explosions and lead poisoning, through to decontamination and remediation work on the ground, UNEP has re-confirmed its essential role in bringing environmental expertise to the UN system’s humanitarian and relief organizations.

UNEP’s Ogoniland Assessment stands out in a number of ways. It addressed an acute problem that had been ongoing for years, causing severe degradation and exposing the affected communities to huge risks. It holds the promise of breaking decades of deadlock in the region, leading to environmental restoration and improved environmental standards for the oil industry, and bringing much needed assistance to protect human health and reduce the risks to affected Ogoni communities.

OGONILAND

- Environmental Assessment of Ogoniland

After 14 months of intense field work, UNEP launched the Environmental Assessment of Ogoniland which showed that pollution from over 50 years of oil operations in the region has penetrated further and deeper than many may have supposed.

The report recommended the establishment of Ogoniland Environmental Restoration Authority to oversee implementation of the study’s recommendations. In particular, following publication of this report, the national Government committed to an unprecedented clean-up operation to be launched in 2012.”
**ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT**

The past year has seen widespread interest in the Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) partnership and its reports. This landmark initiative has had an impact on academic, policy-making and business circles world-wide, as well as non-governmental organizations.

After many years in the making, the first plenary meeting of the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), a new interface between the scientific community and policy makers, began work to operationalize the platform. The next meeting is expected to conclude the modalities and institutional arrangements of the platform; the IPBES promises to fill an important gap.

In partnership with FAO and UNDP, UNEP has continued to implement jointly the United Nations Collaborative initiative on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation in developing countries (UN-REDD), a critical element in the fight against climate change and another example of the green economy in practice, where multiple benefits can be realized, such as, in the case of REDD+, simultaneously combatting emissions, spurring development and ensuring conservation.
ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

To support the Rio+20 discussions on the institutional framework for sustainable development, UNEP has prepared a series of policy briefs on international environmental governance summarizing key elements of the Nairobi-Helsinki process as well as a broader debate on the governance system, and analyzing how different options might help to overcome identified constraints.

As a complement to the main GEO-5 report to be launched in June this year, the publication *Keeping Track of our Changing Environment: from Rio to Rio+20* monitors changes in the human and natural environment that have occurred since the first Rio Conference in 1992 until the present day. The report outlines how, in just twenty years the world has changed more than most of us could ever have imagined – geopolitically, economically, socially and environmentally.

The Eye on Earth Summit, hosted by Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi (EAD) in partnership with the UNEP, addressed the issue of access to environmental information in a world of rapid technological advances, and how these opportunities can be harnessed to monitor the global environment, thereby also providing UNEP with important opportunities for its future work.

TUNZA AND YOUTH

As the world prepares for the Rio+20 conference in June 2012, more than 1,400 young people from 120 countries gathered in Indonesia for the Tunza International Children and Youth Conference with a strong focus on employment. The Bandung Declaration identified access to green jobs as critical for achieving a sustainable transition to the Green Economy.
PARTNERSHIPS AMONG UN SYSTEM ORGANIZATIONS

UNEP’s role as a catalyst, convener and service provider for the UN family of organizations is more relevant today than ever before. The UN Environment Management Group, for which UNEP is the convener and secretariat, has continued to provide a platform for focused cooperation among the UN system organizations, on climate neutrality and sustainability management, environmental and social safeguards, post-2010 biodiversity challenges and global drylands.

Most recently, in December 2011, an inter-agency report on the green economy was launched at Rio+20 inter-sessional meeting in New York, prepared jointly by over 40 UN system organizations, including the Bretton Woods institutions. The report promotes a UN system-wide understanding of the Green Economy approach to achieve sustainable development and offers a range of instruments that governments can use to impact investment choices and consumer behavior.

UNEP has contributed actively to other UN coordination mechanisms, including Rio+20 coordination by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs through ECESA+, the work of the United Nations Development Group, and especially the High-Level Committee on Programmes, by providing the current chairmanship.

www.unemg.org/
IMPLEMENTING REFORMS ACROSS UNEP

I have made it a priority to undertake a major exercise across divisions and regional offices of the organization, to improve management, to become more effective and efficient, to implement results-based management, to reduce costs in the face of a financial crisis that affects all member states - and to do more with less. While I am pleased to share with you that these efforts are bearing fruit, I intend to continue to work towards additional reform, especially in these times of austerity.

Internal reviews have been conducted on programme implementation, on partnerships, and on the design of the MTS and Programme of Work. Careful attention is being paid to their recommendations and guidance, to improve effectiveness, efficiency and delivery, in the ongoing process of preparing the next MTS 2014-2017. Particular attention is being paid to the lessons learned on results-based management.

External audits include three OIOS reviews, on monitoring and evaluation, delivery via partnerships, and relevance, efficiency and effectiveness, while the UN Boards of Auditors carried out a performance audit of UNEP. External reviews have been carried out by Australia, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, as well as the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network Review of UNEP, led by Switzerland and the UK.

Measures have been taken to streamline administrative processes, for example procurement, to increase decentralization through delegation, including to the MEA secretariats administered by UNEP, and, in response to the MOPAN review, enhancing transparency in resource allocation in the Environment Funds, Trust Funds and ear-marked funds.

A total of 58 vacant posts have been frozen from the Environment Fund, and efforts made to increase the ratio of non-post to post expenditures.
The Secretary-General of the United Nations Ban Ki-moon officially opened the new energy neutral offices of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) in Nairobi, Kenya, in March 2011 when the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination meeting was hosted by UNEP, before touring the geothermal energy expansion taking place in Naivasha north of Nairobi. This building showcases the potential that Africa has for providing sustainable energy for all.
Earmarked Contributions and Trust Funds — Top 20 donors in 2011 ($’000)

Financial contributions in 2011
PART 4:
Rio+20 AND BEYOND
Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The challenge of achieving environmental sustainability is far greater than we ever imagined.

The economic costs of inaction are far higher than we thought.

We are crossing planetary boundaries far beyond the Earth’s carrying capacity.

The scarcity of resources from increasing consumption and continued environmental degradation are becoming a threat to peace and security.

Forty years after the founding of UNEP, we have put in place international legal instruments, grown the scientific knowledge base, developed sophisticated data collection systems that harness new information technologies, and have a full toolkit of policy instruments to address these challenges.

But all our reports show evidence of unprecedented environmental change at global and regional levels.

Twenty years after the Rio Earth Summit, there are large gaps in implementation of Agenda 21.

This is the last gathering of Ministers before the Rio+20 Summit and the challenge before us is clear.

For Rio+20 to succeed, it must be a summit on the sustainable development of humankind in 2012 and beyond.

The Conference must address the root causes of the current crisis and crises before that.

While there are divergent views on green economy, ultimately the responsibility rests with nations to find solutions while also providing an international framework of basic norms and standards. That destiny is in our hands, with the Rio+20 summit only four months away.

The Rio+20 discussion on an inclusive green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication is a debate on the future of our prosperity, on how we manage our wealth, and the role that the environment plays.

The outcome must bring about transformative changes.

The generation of decent jobs must be a vehicle for integrating the economic, environmental and social dimensions.
The developing nations must have the necessary assistance to make the transition, especially those that do not have the means of leveraging the investments needed.

Knowledge-sharing, the provision of advisory services and capacity building will be central to the transition.

We must strengthen the environmental governance structures at all levels, including the international environmental governance system.

We need a modern, forward-looking institution, empowered to tackle the complex and interconnected environmental challenges.

We must greatly strengthen the UN system’s ability to deliver on sustainable development.

This will require upgrading and reforming a family of United Nations institutions that are responsible for its delivery.

A multilateral approach is needed now more than ever to meet the challenge of growing environmental pressures, and build economic stability and security.

Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the next three days in plenary and roundtable discussions, as we celebrate the successes of the past 40 years of UNEP’s contribution, let us also look to the future, not only to the Rio+20 Conference in four months’ time, but far beyond, and ask ourselves what seeds we can sow now that will be cause for celebration 40 years hence.